

PARTNERSHIP

In October 2000, the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program ("Rivers & Trails") and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) formalized, through a Memorandum of Understanding, a partnership to help communities across the nation "plan, design, and manage their natural, cultural, and recreation resources."

Rivers & Trails is a partnership program of the National Park Service (NPS) with offices throughout the country. The Seattle office serves Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Rivers & Trails staff work with community groups and local, state and other federal programs to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. The program helps local coalitions develop concept plans, build partnerships to achieve community-set goals, engage the public's imagination, and identify potential sources of funding. All Rivers & Trails projects are result-oriented, with an emphasis on community initiative, cost-sharing, and cooperation.

The mission of the American Society of Landscape Architects is to lead, to educate and to participate in the careful stewardship, wise planning and artful design of our cultural and natural environments. Landscape architects strive to realize a balance among preservation, use and management of the country's resources. Members of ASLA have volunteered their skills, individually and as part of the organization's community stewardship programs, to many projects throughout the nation, such as neighborhood playgrounds and gardens, Habitat for Humanity, and environmental education.

The Rivers & Trails/ASLA partnership provides landscape architects with opportunities to work with communities and raise public awareness about their profession through pro bono technical assistance on Rivers & Trails conservation and recreation projects. In turn, Rivers & Trails is able to sponsor professional design expertise otherwise unavailable or unaffordable in these community-based efforts.

The Seattle NPS office of Rivers & Trails partnered with the Washington State Chapter of ASLA for four highly successful community assistance projects, beginning in 1998. That first collaboration became the prototype upon which the national Rivers & Trails/ASLA partnership is patterned and being developed around the United States.

Once again transforming the national agreement into regional action, members of the Idaho-Montana Chapter of ASLA joined forces with the Rivers & Trails/Seattle office for their inaugural partnership project in Caldwell, Idaho, in 2003. Both organizations look forward to many more successful partnerships.

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2003



Creek Restoration Sites & Trail System

National Park Service
Rivers, Trails & Conservation
Assistance Program
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Seattle, Washington



American Society of
Landscape Architects
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Idaho-Montana
Chapter



Indian Creek Past: A community tug-of-war between the "brains" of the town and the "brawns" of the dairymen. (Caldwell News Tribune Archive, 1928)

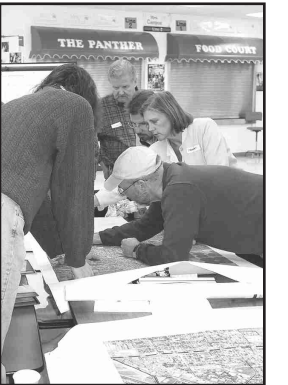


Indian Creek Present and Future: The community gathers on the footbridge at Pioneer Park for the first annual Indian Creek Festival. (Photo: Jan Boles © 2003)

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

Neighborhoods, small towns, and community and regional groups sometimes face planning or design challenges that they are unable to meet due to a lack of expertise, direction, funding, or other resources. This venture between the National Park Service and the Idaho-Montana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (IMASLA) gives communities a chance to benefit from the pairing of Rivers & Trails' organizational resources with the technical skills of IMASLA's landscape architects.

Rivers & Trails and IMASLA, in cooperation with community members, organize an event or series of events to generate ideas and potential solutions to the local challenges. One of the most effective vehicles for producing ideas with limited time and resources is the *design charrette*.



A charrette is generally an intensive, "illustrated brainstorming session" involving any number of people and lasting from a few hours to a few days. It is a tradition dating from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris (in the early 20th Century), where professors would send a cart (*charrette*) around to pick up students' work at the submission deadline. Some students, frantic to complete their drawings, would jump onto the cart as it rolled down the street, hence, working "*en charrette*."

During a charrette, volunteer design professionals work to quickly grasp local problems and devise (and illustrate) solutions. The image of frenetic, last-minute drawing is common to today's charrettes, which some describe as "organized chaos." The objective is high creativity and productivity. This intensity and confusion often yields fertile ideas that might not emerge in a slower, more controlled process.

The ideas generated during a charrette are often presented back to the community in a public forum of some kind. No idea is discarded due to impracticality or disputable details — these decisions are for the community to make later, after the dust of the event has settled.

Come see how the Rivers & Trails/IMASLA charrette process worked for one Idaho community...



A COMMUNITY DESIGN EVENT... TO RESTORE A CREEK AND CREATE A TRAIL SYSTEM

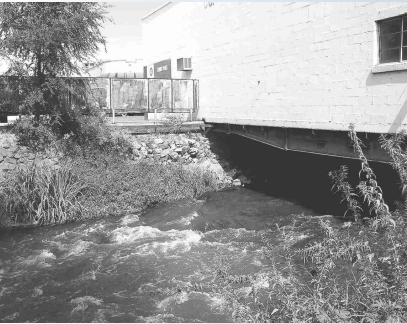


In the Treasure Valley of southwest Idaho, thirty miles west of Boise, the city of Caldwell hosted the inaugural partnership charrette between Rivers & Trails and IMASLA. On a beautiful sunny weekend in September, 2003, thirty-four volunteers with a mixture of backgrounds came together to help the city pursue its vision of a better community through a revitalized downtown. Coordinated by Rivers & Trails staff, ten landscape architects from IMASLA's Olmsted Group (which represents southern Idaho),

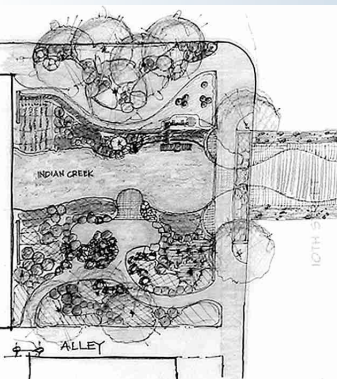


joined with community members and agency representatives to produce both a master plan for trails to connect many diverse sections of the community, and designs for two demonstration sites for the restoration of Indian Creek, which runs through the center of the city.

Indian Creek flows from its mountain source east of the valley, through the communities of Kuna, Nampa and Caldwell, on its way to the Boise River. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the creek was a center of activity for businesses (power from water wheels), farms (irrigation) and local recreation. Development pressures and increasing pollution in the creek led to burying long stretches of it under roadways, bridges and businesses, most intensively in the 1950s. Since that time, improvements in watershed management have helped to improve the water quality and now Indian Creek is again home to a number of fish and wildlife species.



Caldwell's downtown was historically the commercial hub of the valley, but today — in spite of a thriving population of 31,000 and a significant and growing Hispanic community — only a few businesses remain, the result of competing development outside the city core. Recently, city officials recognized the idea of restoring Indian Creek's ecosystem as a potential catalyst to revitalize the downtown area, and partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to investigate the technical feasibility of such a restoration. Knowing that a daylighting project (uncovering the creek channel) would take at least five years to complete, city officials wanted to develop plans for a "demonstration" restoration at two sites which could be implemented within a couple of years, to give the community a living example of what the creek could be. The city also saw an essential need to connect their downtown to parks, neighborhoods, local schools and Albertson College with a system of paths and trails, which would provide opportunities for both alternative transportation and "close-to-home" recreation.



CAR WASH SITE
INDIAN CREEK RESTORATION

the 2003 charrette. A citizen advisory group was formed to help develop the scope and goals of the charrette, which focused on the trails master plan and the two demonstration sites along the creek. This group included a broad cross-section of the community: bicycle advocates, business owners, irrigation districts, city staff, teachers, county fairground officials, the downtown redevelopment team, and city council members.

The charrette started early Friday evening, with a driving tour for all the participants, followed by a discussion over dinner. The tour familiarized visiting volunteers with Caldwell

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"The technical expertise of the NPS and ASLA combined with the guidance of local residents and experts resulted in a plan that will, for the first time, make our community vision a reality."

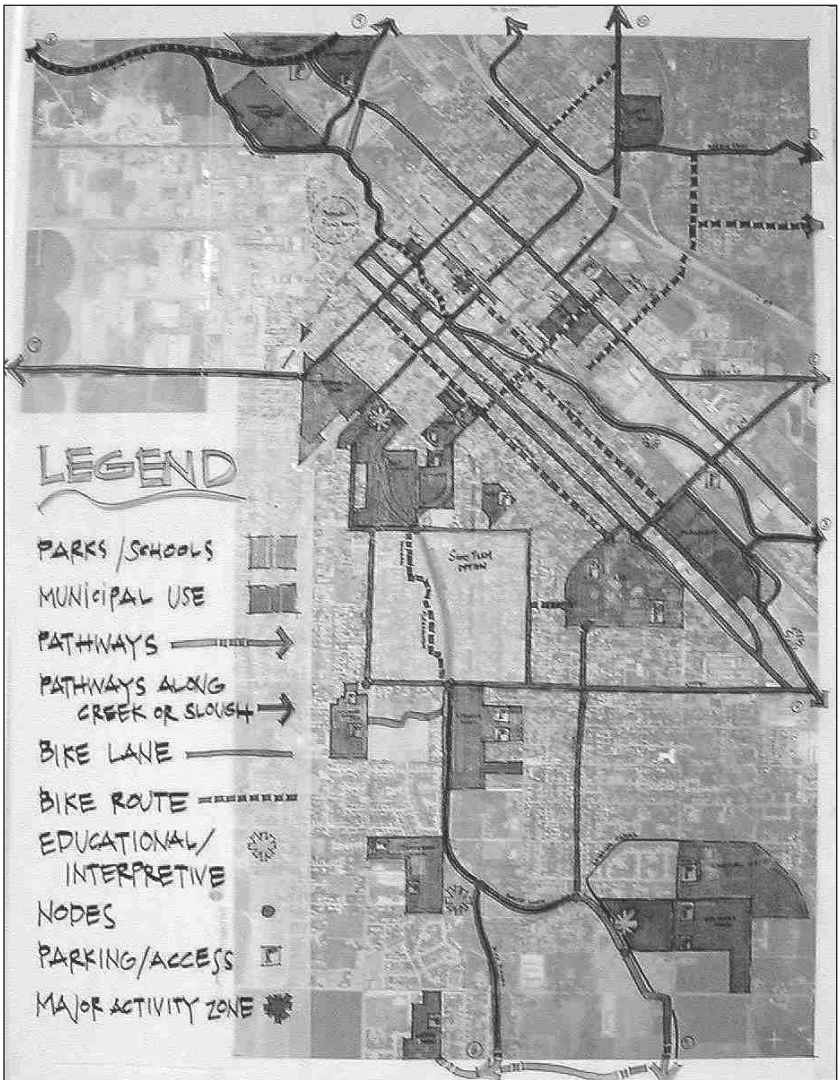
Rob Hopper, President, Caldwell City Council



RESULTS

The designs developed during the Caldwell charrette were showcased at the first annual Indian Creek Festival a week after the charrette. In addition, to viewing the plans, festival goers enjoyed music, face painting, food, and the dedication of two public art works in Pioneer Park. The same week, the results were also displayed at a public meeting where residents heard about all of the city's efforts to revitalize their town. Several hundred citizens were able to see the plans at each of these two events. The plans, sketches, and recommendations helped the community visualize the possibilities and the reception from the community has been overwhelmingly positive.

With the support of the community and assistance from the National Park Service, the City of Caldwell, is developing final concept plans for both the trail system and restoration sites based on the work that was developed in the charrette. These plans will be integrated into other city planning activities and adopted by the City Council. The city is optimistic that the restoration site plans will be realized within one to two years and the trail system within five years.



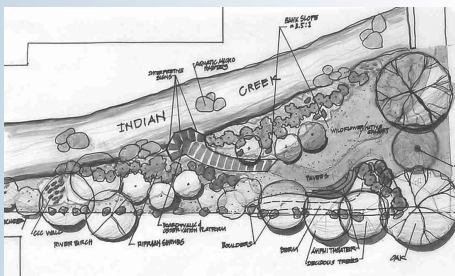
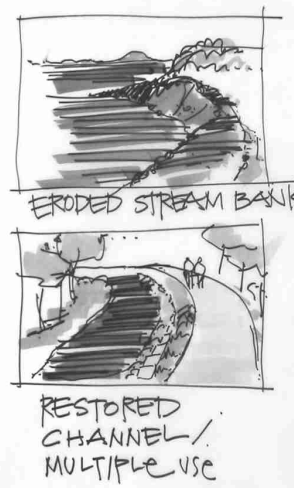
Pathways and Trails System Master Plan produced at the 2003 Caldwell charrette.

— its existing and potential pathways and trails, the primarily Hispanic business district, Albertson College, the fairgrounds, schools, YMCA, and nearby Canyon Hill, which offers a spectacular view of all these features. They traveled along the five-block stretch proposed for daylighting, starting at one potential demonstration site, the "Like-Nu Car Wash," a defunct business built over the creek, and continuing downstream the second site, "Triangle Park."

Early Saturday morning the Mayor welcomed the volunteers to Syringa Middle School, the charrette venue, expressing appreciation to Caldwell residents, fellow city officials, IMASLA landscape architects and professional partners for their generous commitment of time and expertise. The design process began with three energetic rounds of brainstorming by the whole group. They looked at what makes Caldwell unique — the Oregon Trail, agriculture, interurban rail service through the valley, Albertson College and a diverse and growing population. Participants then identified opportunities and constraints for the demonstration (restoration) sites — including access and proximity to the water, and a coherent connection between the two sites. They did the same for the path and trail system — encouraging wildlife habitat in trail corridors, and following historic trail, rail and highway routes where possible. Then the group was divided into five teams, two restoration teams moving off to work on layouts and details for their respective sites, while three trail teams met together to establish types and characteristics of pathways and trails that the Caldwell system would need. These included separated multi-use pathways, bike lanes and designated and signed bike routes. Next, the three trail teams separated, each to concentrate on its assigned section of the city.

Several times throughout the day, team members gave brief reports on their work to the whole group, to maintain close coordination between each team's ideas. A few teams made quick site visits and field-checked their plans. It was a sunny but cool day, and the hot breakfast and lunch provided kept everyone fueled and upbeat through the intensive process. Everyone shared their expertise without reserve — renowned artist, high school student, irrigation district manager, landscape architect, city councilman and college professor alike.

At the end of a very busy day, the public was invited to the school to see and hear the recommendations from the charrette teams. The trail teams worked fast and furiously to fit their sections together, creating a combined master plan and map of regional connections. The two restoration sites, proposed as "pocket parks" on Indian Creek, were shown in colorful sketches. Both sites are designed to provide wildlife habitat and feature native and ornamental plants and sculptural elements that will engage visitors' senses. Each team of volunteers presented their work to the audience of Caldwell citizens, who responded positively and with sincere appreciation for the group's effort.



"As a landscape architect, I am always amazed by the powerful results that can be so quickly achieved through the charrette process, from such diverse groups of individuals, and with only the project and City's appeal to bring them together."

Jim Mihan, President, IMASLA

Produced by the National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program and the Idaho-Montana Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects. Design by Gilchrist LandDesign. Photos courtesy of Rivers & Trails, except where otherwise noted. Fish/turtle motif from the "Pioneer Park Mural" by Ramos, Claassen & Art Club, 2003. Printed on recycled paper.

